



21 APR 2016

Josh Connolly
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Dear Josh

Thank you for your email of 31 March 2016 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

1. *Information on the process that new subjects and achievement standards go through to be added to the NCEA curriculum.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

My response sets out how schools design programmes to meet the learning needs of their students with direction and guidance from the National Curriculum. It also clarifies the difference between the National Curriculum and the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

The National Curriculum sets out the direction for student learning and provides guidance for schools as they design and review their curriculum. It consists of two documents, *The New Zealand Curriculum* for English medium schools, and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* for Māori medium schools. You can view the National Curriculum on the Ministry's Te Kete Ipurangi website at: www.tki.org.nz.

Each school's board of trustees, through their principal and staff, is required to develop and implement a curriculum for their students:

- that is underpinned by and consistent with the principles of the National Curriculum;
- in which the values set out in the National Curriculum are encouraged and modelled and are explored by students;
- that supports students to develop the key competencies set out in the National Curriculum; and
- that is derived from the learning area achievement objectives.

In addition to this, primary and secondary schools are required to provide all students in years 1 to 10 with effectively taught programmes of learning in areas of:

- 1) English, the arts, health and physical education, mathematics and statistics, science, social sciences and technology, for English medium schools; or
- 2) Te Reo Māori, pāngarau, hauora, tikanga-ā-iwi, ngā toi, pūtaiao, hangarau and Te Reo Pākehā, for Māori medium kura.

All schools/kura with students in Years 7 to 10 should be working towards offering students opportunities for learning a second or subsequent language/ngā reo.

The education system for schools is made up of 13 year levels. Primary education starts at Year 1 and goes to Year 8 (around 5 to 12 years of age). Secondary education goes from Year 9 to Year 13 (around 13 to 17 years of age).

The NCEA is the national senior secondary school qualification. Students will usually be assessed during their last three years at school (Years 11 to 13). They can achieve NCEA at 3 levels in a wide range of courses and subjects.

Programmes of learning offered in secondary schools tend to become more specialised from Year 9 to Year 13. These specialised programmes are referred to as “subjects”. These include traditional subjects such as geography, chemistry, music and accounting, and also newer subjects such as media studies, education for sustainability, earth and space science, tourism and hospitality.

There is no restriction on schools in terms of the subject names that they give their programmes of learning. For example, some schools may offer programmes that are called forensic science, environmental studies, or sports studies. *In this sense there is no prescribed process for new subjects.*

In the senior secondary school there is a focus on gaining the NCEA qualifications. Credits for the NCEAs can be gained by recognising student learning through assessment standards. These can be either achievement or unit standards. The Ministry develops achievement standards for all learning that is derived from the National Curriculum. Other standard-setting bodies, for example, Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), develop unit standards for learning that is derived from other bodies of knowledge.

The Ministry has a set of principles that are used to guide decisions on what subjects to develop NCEA achievement standards for. These principles are set out below.

1. **Curriculum Principles:** the subject for which achievement standards are sought must have a well-established and agreed body of knowledge. A well-established and agreed body of knowledge involves that subject having:
 - big ideas or key concepts, and the body of knowledge of the subject widely agreed across subject matter experts and teachers;
 - key skills and competencies which would be developed through the study of the subject;
 - clear curriculum pathways which enable students to participate in future study, training, or employment;
 - clear achievement objectives at appropriate curriculum levels;
 - indicators of progression at each appropriate curriculum level and across curriculum levels; and
 - clear and demonstrable links to the National Curriculum which do not duplicate existing learning outcomes.

2. **Sector Principles:** the following sector principles are relevant considerations to be taken into account:

- subject maturity: the subject has been taught for some time and has an established and agreed body of knowledge as defined above;
- evidence of sufficient numbers of students taking the subject and teachers teaching the subject to NCEA Level 3 to warrant the development of achievement standards, recognising that Māori engaged in Māori medium learning are a minority group and exceptions may need to be made to this principle;
- a reasonable spread of schools offering the subject across the country, recognising that Māori engaged in Māori medium learning are a minority group and exceptions may need to be made to this principle; and
- sufficient resource and expertise available within the subject community to provide the infrastructure required to maintain and support the development of achievement standards and the ongoing exam writing, marking, moderation and resource activity development.

In addition to the above principles, both the Ministry and NZQA must give due consideration to the infrastructure and resource implications involved in developing the proposed achievement standards.

When the Ministry decides to develop new achievement standards it convenes a group of curriculum, teaching and assessment experts to draft the standards and examples of assessment activities. Consultation with a wider group of stakeholders and trialling in schools refines these drafts. The standards then undergo NZQA quality assurance and are published on the NZQA website ready for use in schools from the following year.

If you have further questions about the processes involved in the development of new subjects or NCEA achievement standards, I suggest you email the Ministry, at enquiries.national@education.govt.nz, including your contact details, so your enquiry can be directed to a member of Ministry staff who can assist you.

Yours sincerely



Lisa Rodgers
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement